

PAT MATTHEWS

Fatal Fall off a Cliff – Sydney 1898

Nellie woke up in a hopeful mood, perhaps Darcy would be kinder today; she felt that another beating would be the end of her. Why was he so cruel, what did she do to deserve it? It is all very well having time to pursue one's own interests, but diving was taking over Darcy's life, he was becoming obsessed. Only last week he had turned up to a formal dinner wearing his dive suit including helmet; no doubt he thought it would impress the other guests, they may have been impressed at his daring she thought, but they would certainly have had a good laugh behind his back.

"Let them bloody well laugh" he retorted when Nellie challenged him about his absurd behaviour, "they, and you, should be grateful that there are people like me around, willing to push new frontiers and change the world".

He had been livid when he caught Nellie rolling her eyes and sighing, it was the first time he physically abused her. It damn well hurt, she had been left with severe bruising to her cheek and it felt as though her arm had been twisted to breaking point. The emotional abuse was bad enough, but being physically abused turned her legs to jelly and her heart to harden. For the first time ever, she questioned the nature of their relationship, was it really love, what was love anyway, and what did his abusive behaviour indicate? All she wanted was more time for the two of them alone together. Nellie was by nature optimistic and it was gave her hope on this eventful Friday.

Nellie had nothing specific to do until Darcy's visit a couple of hours later. She stretched languorously and decided a bit longer in bed wouldn't hurt. Darcy would tell her she was lazy, but damn him, if he was happy to spend time diving in freezing water, she wasn't; she preferred warmth and luxury. Maybe we are ill matched, let's see what today's visit brings. When Nellie finally got up, bathed dressed and ready for the day it was late morning. She decided a stroll along the cliff tops would be a pleasant way to spend the time before Darcy arrived for lunch. The weather was warm, the sky a beautiful clear blue, most inviting.

Nellie set off at quite a brisk pace following the path along the edge of the cliffs, the sea was aquamarine in colour, clear and calm and the sun bore down gently on her back, she felt a surge of happiness. "I think Darcy and I will be sorting things out today, it's all going to work out for the best".

Suddenly she heard a shout behind her, and as she turned around saw that it was Darcy running toward her. How lovely, he is early; we will be able to enjoy the walk together she thought. As he approached she saw that he was carrying something bulky under his arm, but could not tell what it was. "Hello my darling", Darcy called out, "I am so excited, I have a wonderful surprise for you". Nellie smiled lovingly at him and as their bodies met, he gave her a chaste kiss. "Come, let's go and sit on that ledge and look out over the ocean while we talk".

He hid the bundle as best possible from her and Nellie didn't ask about it, she didn't want to spoil his surprise. Once seated on the ledge, warmed by the sun and the general ambience, Darcy proffered his surprise, look what I have for you, he said. Initially Nellie could not work out what it was and then to her horror she realised it was a pink diving suit; "specially made for you my brave darling, so we can spend more time together", Darcy announced, clearly very pleased with himself.

"Oh my God, no no no", the horrified Nellie replied. She pulled away from him in shock and blindly staggered off. Darcy realised that she was heading dangerously close to the cliff edge, still clasping the pink dive suit he rushed after her but it was too late. He watched in horror as she careened over the cliff edge.